DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 282 291 EA 019 330

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TITLE Planning and the School Business Office.
INSTITUTION Association of School Business Officials International, Reston, VA.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 30p.; Chapter 10 of "Principles of School Business Management" (EA 019 320).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Planning; Elementary Secondary Education; Government School Relationship; Institutional Environment; Public Policy; School Administration; *School Business Officials; School Districts; Social Influences; Theories

ABSTRACT

This chapter of "Principles of School Business Management" focuses on issues and organizational realities that affect the planning conducted by school business offices. The chapter deals first with theories of planning and then considers their relationship to the organizational context in which they will be implemented. Among the theories reviewed are the rational-technical, the disjointed-incremental, the "mixed-scanning" method of combining these first two theories, the organizational development theory, and new theory directions taken in the 1980s. These broad considerations are followed by a discussion of the societal and governmental issues that the planning efforts of local school districts can anticipate but not control, such as statutory and administrative laws, auditing and evaluation requirements, case law, categorical funding programs, demographics, and economic and political developments. The chapter concludes by providing a simple, schematic presentation of planning that clarifies the relationships among key factors in the planning process without serving as a limited, practical model. The factors addressed include public school and environmental values; organization for planning; assessment, forecasting, goal-setting, and development of strategies; and the implementation and evaluation of the process. Fifty-six footnotes cite relevant sources. (PGD)

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Planning and the School Business Office

A.P. Johnston and Kenneth Hood

In the United States we have had a long-running love-hate relationship with planning. On the one hand we cherish individual freedom, initiative and responsibility, and on the other we recognize the need for long-term decisions and commitments on matters that affect a community of interests. The railing of one political candidate against "those pointy-headed social planners who can't even park a bicycle straight" captures the invective felt against planners. Nevertheless, there is clear recognition that "getting the government off the backs of the American people" is not equivalent to abdicating responsibility to think through the long-term and collective consequences of both private and public decisions.

Today we call this responsibility "accountability" and mean by that a duty or moral obligation to direct public resources to public purposes in an efficient and effective manner. This includes fiscal accountability in the sense of controlling and recording of money spent, as well as linking the development of an organization to neutral and powerfully important goals or shared values. Long-range planning (we do not intend to make a distinction between long-range planning and the currently popular term strategic planning) involves ferreting out what is really important and developing a means to provide a general direction to the organization as those values are interpreted and reinterpreted.

This chapter is deliberately light on planning technique and technology, in favor of an emphasis on issues and organizational realities that often do not receive adequate attention. There is little to be added to the already voluminous literature on planning technique and technology. Where the chapter differs with current conceptualizations, however, these are discussed.

The chapter deals first with theories of planning and then considers their relationship to the organizational context in which they will be implemented. These broad considerations are followed by a discussion of the societal and government issues which the planning efforts of the local school district can only anticipate, not control, such as federal and state policy. Planning has not fared well in public education due to a lack of conceptual "fit" between planning and the operating realities of schools. This chapter will thus discuss concepts fundamental to planning, organizational realities, the environmental context of the 1980s and a number of political and organizational considerations.

Planning Theory

Much of what passes for planning theory has its origins in other disciplines and is thus not an entirely separate and distinct literature base.[1] There is, nevertheless,

considerable discussion about theoretical or at least abstract conceptions of how to best engage in planning and the organizational implications of each. The theories discussed below consider the fundamental conceptual alternatives for organizing for planning as well as for planning to organize.

Rational-Technical

Clearly the most widely written about concept of planning is that of the rational-technical view in which clear goals are established, cause-effect relationships between means and ends are made and monitoring measures and procedures are explicitly predetermined.[2] The method is rational in that it starts with overt and explicit statements of intent (where you want to go), and reasons "backwards" (deductive reasoning) to link together various means of realizing the desired end (how you are going to get there).

An advantage of the rational-technical approach is its focus on achievement. The process is impossible to implement, however, without having carefully refined at least one, and generally several, goals that serve to guide the planning process. In a technical sense, the conception is a model of efficiency, an engineered design that links together part A and part B with processes X and Y. Its organizational analog is the bureaucracy that assumes that organizational goals provide the direction for product manufacturing and that there is a reasonable congruence between the large goals of the organization and the work of multiple groups and individuals within the organization. Clearly stated goals, specified ends-means relationships and benchmarks of progress have forced an organization to remain on target other than for deliberate reasons.[3]

Underlying this conception is "control," or planning built around technical production processes. In order to carry out the process of coordinating the technical work, a rationalized bureaucratic conception of planning is necessary. Such is the work of the "planocrats."[4] Once the coordination plan is laid out, the next step is to keep the process running according to plan. Stability, production and control are achieved through a standardized process which is deliberately static, systematic and logical.

Irrespective of its application to areas other than public education, the difficulties that educators have had with conceiving and implementing a plan reflecting the rational-technical approach are legendary. One reason is that the most basic goals of public education are imprecise and abstract. Quality, excellence and educating for maximum potential are tidy and clean goal statements that are open to multiple and often competing interpretations as to how you achieve them. Their real meaning depends on who is interpreting. These have been called "wicked" policy problems simply because there is not a single, indisputable right answer.[5]

The difficulty stems from the conceptual complexity of the goals in terms of: 1) the relative priority of the different goals under consideration, 2) the fact that some goals are means to other goals (interactive effects of organizational dynamics are enormously complex), and 3) the nature of a specific goal or goals with respect to a particular task.[6] A popular way of dealing with conceptual complexity is to simplify the statements,[7] but by the time goals are "translated" into objectives and means, the interpretation of others (particularly implementors) cloud the original meaning of the goals. In any case, priorities are usually left to implementors or others in the organization, thus diverting the responsibility to a technical or organizational analysis rather than to a political (value preference) choice.[8]

There are, in addition, technical difficulties which relate to the knowledge and information concerning the best, or even a very good, way of doing things. Often boards, administrators and teachers lack specific knowledge concerning what the alternatives are, much less what will work best over the long-term. Sometimes the shortcomings can be remedied by obtaining additional information, at least to the point where a reasonable judgment can be made about "what will work here." But this requires a trial and error approach which fosters on "it is OK to fail" mind set. The assumption of "perfect" cause-effect knowledge is just too strenuous for state-of-the-art capacity to predict long-range specific outcomes.[9] A corporate manager observed that even though the coporate information system could track "the fall of every sparrow," everyone secretly knew the absurdity of projecting numbers out five years to decimal points.[10]

To complicate matters further, the approach requires additional rationalization about: 1) who in the organization is best suited to carry out the task, 2) the right amount of time, dollar and personnel resources to allocate, and 3) the specific measures for success. The task quickly becomes impossible in all but routine assignments.

In theory most administrators agree with the general intent of this approach to planning, but in reality the requirements of the model are not met. As a concept which grew out of a technical and scientific view of the world which held the environment steady (the laboratory) and carefully controlled ends-means relationships, the multiple demands could be met, at least when the objective was narrowly defined. But the world of broad goals, human subjects and organizational dynamics clearly does not fit under, nor could it be made to conform, to the template of the rational conception.

Disjointed-Incremental

It was in reaction to the highly stylized and arguably idealistic view of the world described above, that Chester Barnard, Charles Lindblom and others countered with a theory that grew out of empirical research concerning how organizations really work. Rather than starting with a conception of how the world should behave, these managerial theorists started out by describing how goals are established and decisions made and implemented.

While their work was not written with the purpose of contributing to planning theory, the implications for planning cannot be ignored. Clearly relevant to planning theory was the contention that decisions are made under conditions of extreme uncertainty. The purpose of planning is to reduce uncertainty, and insofar as the arena of the plan can be adequately controlled, the purpose is met. If controls are not adequate, however, the purpose is defeated or at least only partially satisfied. What Lindblom and others found was that there are multiple and competing influences on the organization, many of which cannot be adequately stablilized or held sufficiently steady to stay within the closely reasoned series of cause-effect relationships laid out in the rational planning style.[11] This means for schools, for example, that influence outside of the district, such as economic and political conditions or federal and state policy, cannot be adequately forecasted and controlled to carry out a long-range plan in the rational style.

According to these theorists, events inside the organization are equally complex in that there are many decision points involving a large number of actors each of whom interprets the goals and policy of the organization from his or her own

perspective. That is, each decision maker tries to "make sense" of the operations for which he or she is responsible, or, in a more Machiavellian light, turns the organization to his or her own ends. Either way, the conclusion is that organizations are sufficiently complex so as not to be able to be controlled to the extent demanded by rational planning without smothering the organization in red tape.

In like manner, when applied to schools, even at the district level, the approach would claim that to impose a single template of "sameness" on all schools—even on "similar" classrooms — violates common sense. Note that this conception does not deal with the normative question of how much autonomy professionals should be permitted, but with the practical question of how the enormous variability within even a single classroom can best be "managed." The essential question becomes, "Who has the best information at the operational level to make the kind of decisions needed to keep the organization going?"

The uncertainty of events and the enormous complexity of organizations thus prevent top-level administrators from having the information or the overall knowledge needed to make long-range choices. They would, therefore, be better served by a descriptive model that closely corresponds to the conditions under which organizations operate.

In a paper in 1959, Lindblom coined the term "disjointed incrementalism" to describe the nature of decisions as being disjointed, not by deliberate design, but as a result of incomplete knowledge in any one place in the organization. While broad purposes are a part of any organization and constitute the initial reason for organizational existence, planning in a real sense takes place at the operational level where decisions as events, exceptions and anomalies occur. It is through such decisions that the real policy of the organization is made. By keeping closely in touch with the internal and external environments, the organization keeps itself adaptable.

Lindblom further described decision making as incremental, meaning that it seldom leads to radical, high risk changes, but rather marginal ones. Organizational decision makers add or subtract a little here and there, making small changes to accommodate environmental shifts. Incrementalism, as Lindblom saw it, is necessary because proposed means of control have faltered, as in zero-based budgeting and program planning and budgeting systems (PPBS), due to a demand for more operational knowledge than was possible to accumulate and interpret.

In terms of planning, disjointed incrementalism may seem to some to be a way of simply rationalizing "business as usual." To others it may seem like no planning at all. Planners viewed it differently, however. Since they recognized that decisions are made within the broad context of organizational purposes, planners could feel with some degree of assurance, that transformational decisions will not be made in the disjointed manner, thus leaving some room for deliberate and long-range planning. They also recognized that to be effective, planning would have to be attentive to the reality of the organization into which it is to be integrated.

Nevertheless, some scholars saw problems with the disjointed-incremental approach. While they agreed that the rational-technical scheme was too rigid for practical purposes, they were skeptical of the flexibility of disjointed incrementalism claiming that it was difficult to tell "planning" from what it set out to replace.[12] Thus by the late 1960s, Etzioni explored a middle road between a tightly structured rational-technical model and the loosely structured disjointed incremental position.

Mixed-Scanning

In "Mixed-Scanning: A Third Approach to Planning," Etzioni laid out the rational-technical view, contrasted it with disjointed incrementalism and offered a critique of both.[13] The rational model, he claimed, makes impossible demands in that it requires a constant comprehensive vigil over the goals and the operations of the organization. Regardless of whether it is an ideal model, the time and human resources required to implement it are not available. But Etzioni worried that the incremental approach is too attentive to short-term operations, generally no futher in the future than next year's budget, that the organization can drift year after year without considering either imaginative new directions or potentially disastrous environmental shifts on the horizon. In short, Etzioni saw planning "theory" as two different ends to a single continuum. With this conception, he searched for a middle ground.

In his "mixed scanning" Etzioni proposed the metaphor of a camera in which the broad view of the purposes of an organization might be thought of as a wide-angle lens, while a sharply focused lens would symbolize immediate operations. That is, the rational-comprehensive view might be too demanding for normal operations, but it was essential, especially in a turbulent environment, to take a wide-angle view of the future. This permits opportunity for creativity and risk as well as for minor adjustments based on a long-range view. The view from the air can take place periodically or whenever a major decision is to be made.

The "close up" view, to continue the metaphor, shows top management the detail of the landscape or, in organizational terms, the specific operations. Comprehensive planning relating to the day-by-day routine, is not necessary. As Lindblom suggested, such planning evolves according to Etzioni as successive but limited opportunities for choice are presented to those closest to the work of the organization (disjointed), each decision varying slightly from previous operations (incremental).

Mixed scanning is an inviting logical response to the previous positions, but it, too, is subject to criticism. First, there is the criticism that it is in the tradition of rational theory and, therefore, subject to similar limitations. The demands for a depth of understanding in all areas, the information requirements and to some extent the cause-effect mechanical linkages burden mixed-scanning, even though the demand for order and control from top down is relieved. Second, mixed scanning is criticized for not making it clear what constitutes a "big" decision; that is, when is it appropriate to use the wide-angle lens? When does a school business administrator know when to make more than an incremental decision? In short, while the theory is conceptually attractive, it has not been made sufficiently practical for the world of school business administration.

Organizational Development

The 1960s and 1970s saw another reaction to the rational planning model, a reaction which focused on how to mobilize human resources, not only toward achieving organizational goals, but also toward employee self-development, growth and satisfaction. Organizational Development (OD) was introduced to the planning literature as a human relations counterpart to the rational theory. According to OD, clean lines of logical thought overlook human motivation and organizational dynamics. The response was to focus on the interpersonal side of the organi-

zation with the intent of making it part of the long-range plan, as well as a part of the planning process.

There are two closely related criticisms of organizational development as it relates to planning. First, it tends to focus on a single environmental influence. As important as human development is to planning, there are many other influences that could affect the future of an organization.

> I have yet to see an organization development program that uses an intervention strategy other than an interpersonal one, and this is serious when one considers that the most important strategies of change in our society are political, legal and technological.[14]

A second criticism of organizational development is that, like the rational theory, it attempts to apply a single strategy to all organizations. What seemed a promising foundation for planning was still locked into "one best way" for all organizations. Generally, Organizational Development does not distinguish between professionally staffed organizations such as schools, and assembly line organizations, or between organizations existing within a turbulent external environment and those operating within stable environments.

On the surface, organizational development looks to be an integrating and multifaceted approach to planning and decision theory. In effect, however, it is merely an appendage of rational theory, keeping intact the characteristics of goal orientation and the analytical and objective mentality. Thus, what appeared to be new turned out to be mixing new wine with old and filling the same old bottles.

Planning Theory in the 1980s

The rational-technical theory is still widely considered to be the proper approach to planning. Recent books and articles dealing with planning, especially assessment and research, are still concerned with techniques and technology borrowed from the traditional scientific point of view. Management by objectives, clear mission statements established *a priori*, deductive reasoning and quantitative methodology dealing with large aggregations of data assume that organizations are machines held together by mechanical linkages and that the purpose of planning is control over the intended workings of the organization.[15] In short, the mentality is that of static stability of the machine as distinguished from a dynamic stability resulting from evolution and development.

Certainly the hold that the rational-technical approach to planning has on education, as revealed in current professional literature, is due, in part, to the adoption by the federal government in the mid-1960s of planning models established to promote fiscal and program accountability. The federal and state governments began to legislate the development of planning documents. Models used to ensure effective project management within the defense department were adapted to education and other human services to meet these mandates. Planning became formalized at various levels throughout the nation's governmental bureaucracies.

While it is important to understand that the rational-technical approach to planning is part of our "roots" as educational administrators and managers, it is equally important to understand that the theory and practice which flow from it are beginning to be reassessed. Everything from the traditional view of science to the

operating assumptions of how schools work organizationally is coming under increasing scrutiny. The result is the unfolding of the "new wave" of planning based upon common sense and those things which experience confirms daily.[16] In other words, planning does not only proceed in accordance with the organizational chart, but also takes into consideration informal channels carved out by tradition, personalities and trust.

Yet, tradition-bound as we are, we seem determined to make rational and bureaucratic theory work against all odds and against the experience that each of us has had in our work environments. Certainly the rational model is appropriate for many activities of school business managers, but to use it as the only model distorts the full and rich variations which exist among schools. In short, the facts do not always add up to the reality.

In *Education and The Cult of Efficiency,*[17] Raymond Callahan points out how schools adopted scientific management theory used by the private sector with little adaptation or consideration for difference in purpose, level of skill or type of motivation of those employed. Schools became goal-oriented bureaucracies, ignoring what parents, teachers and school administrators have known all along, that children cannot be counted on to have uniform behavior, motivation and expectations. Nor is it desirable, for to do so is to strip from children their humanity, their individuality.

"New Wave" Theory

To claim a new wave in planning was created in the 1980s would be to claim too much, for history hardly turns such sharp corners. What can be claimed, however, is that by the onset of the 1980s management theorists were coming to terms with an essentially different ideological conception about how organizations should and do in fact function well. The tie-in with local control, school site management, effective schools and other contemporary views of organizational effectiveness should become evident.

New Theories of Waves and Evolution. It has been a part of the intellectual history of western civilization to seek order in the universe. This tradition has bestowed on us powerful insight and useful applications in our daily lives. However, we permitted this striving toward interpretation of order to become not only the predominate interpretation, but the "natural" or common sensical notion of the way things should be. Order is good, disorder bad. "Messy," "unpredictable," "dissipative" are not words associated with good administration.

The early 1900s saw the first explosive break with this line of thinking. Physicists found that not only was more than one interpretation of the same phenomena plausible, but also that the various interpretations may not make sense under the old view of harmony in nature.[18] For example, light could be both wave and particle at the same time, thus violating the idea that nature is explicit or definitive. Darwin's account of evolution, to take another example, showed steady progress, random behavior, failed mutations (experiments) and dead ends (lack of adaptation). Thermodynamics is an example of a science which has demonstrated incredible accuracy in applied mechanics. Nevertheless, it admits to a random and nonpredictable nature at its very core, being unable to explain which particular molecules will be given off as steam in a steam turbine and which will remain as water.[19]

Economics, demographers and actuarial tables developed for the life insurance industry exhibit similar characteristics in being able to predict, with reasonable accuracy, some of the time and at a certain level of aggregation, but never particulars. Winston Churchill, who drank too much, smoked too much, ate rich foods did not exercise, but still lived long and well, is an anomaly. And yet such "anomalies" are a part of our daily lives—none of us exactly fitting the general pattern, none of us having 1.8 children.

This discussion is not to denigrate the importance of science or systematic observation in the physical and social world. If we did not have an ability to predict, order and control, there would be no reason to even think about planning. The point, rather, is to highlight some of the challenges to the old notions of a controlled bureaucracy.[20] To use one of the examples again, Darwin saw nature as having both a general direction of evolution with clear and broad patterns of development and, at the so-called micro level where we all live and act out our lives, confusion or "variance" in which we prize the opportunity to take intiative, to create, to succeed and to fail.

We need to be aware but not overly concerned that schools do not have a one-to-one correspondence with light particles or natural environments. But utilizing metaphors from our environment is appropriate if for no other reason than to emphasize that our social organizations exist within a larger environment to which they ultimately must relate and roughly correspond. Such is the care of the philosophy behind systems theory.

Impact on Educational Planning. What, then, does this mean for the organizational context in which educational planning occurs? It means that theoreticians, researchers and students of organizations are finally confirming what teachers and administrators have known all along—that schools, in order to be effective, must be both orderly and controlled and highly adaptive, always ready to give way to idiosyncratic variation and difference.[21] The paradox of "both/and" is difficult to manage intellectually, administratively and politically,[22] but at least we are in a position of no longer having to deny, for ideological purposes, that important educational goals and educational means are vague, ambiguous and subject to legitimate reinterpretation depending on one's operational experience. One must accept the concept that operational realities of schooling are more analogous to a set of general parameters that capture some fuzzy phenomenon than some single line of "truth."[23] We are at the point of understanding that we do not have to resolve the implications of contradiction and multiple meanings.

A way of understanding organizational context in "new wave" ideological terms is to systematically observe how productive organizations actually work. From the observations have come two key points. First, people need to believe in what they are doing. It is the role of the leader to provide vision and create an atmosphere of shared purpose among the various employees within the organization through his or her own actions and written and oral communications.[24] Actions of leaders shape attitudes and beliefs about what is really important as people "do" their way into planning.[25] And while many specific and major operational decisions may be made from the center (top), they "evolve" as they are filtered and adapted by the makers (of products) and doers (of services) who are openly encouraged to make their own interpretations of how values apply and how to get the job done.

Connecting links remain the same for the new wave organization as for the old-style bureaucracy: policies, legal mandates, contractual agreements and logical

connections of job specifications and reporting relationships. Yet, the connections are reinforced by a "social glue" which comes from a recognition of mutual dependency, of doing something important together and a sense of excitement. Leaders of organizations recognize their roles as motivators of people to directive action by creating the meanings by which people live. "We went to the moon," wrote Norman Cousins, "not because of our technology, but because of our imagination." . . . The conception fathered the technology".[26] The way we phrase our fundamental purposes can "put people into motion."[27] Of course, resources, structure and routine are necessary, but they are not sufficient. This is precisely the shortcoming of the rational model which prefers analytical detachment over demonstrations of strong commitment. A technological environment breeds a technological response, not a human commitment.

A second point emerging from recent observations, particularly of schooling operations, is that organizations tend to have both loosely and tightly coupled operations.[28] Tightly coupled operations are controlled from and made accountable to the center, such as transportation schedules, payroll and building construction. Tightly coupled aspects, according to Weick, have four characteristics: there are rules, agreements on the rules, inspection and feedback to improve compliance. Whenever one of these is missing, a loosely coupled system is the effect.

The problem with administrative theory in the rational model has been the attempt to tightly couple all operations. Attempts to control, in the conventional sense, the highly idiosyncratic and specific activities of teaching and learning are virtually impossible. Certainly the reasons given for attempting to do so have not arisen from what is known about teaching and learning, but stem rather from a logical and scientifically inspired and politically legitimized view of how schools should be run.

Evidence suggests that the unintended consequences of tightening control over instruction with conventional means is to produce an environment which in the long run is inimical to the very interests one is trying to promote. On the other hand, new wave ideology does not suggest lack of control, disjointed incrementalism or even mixed scanning as the appropriate approach to leadership and planning. Indeed, what makes the new concept "new" at all is an approach that comes from outside of the rationalistic tradition altogether in acknowledging ambiguity, paradox, messiness, individual difference, decentralization and dissipative structures as normal in nature and as descriptive and normative characteristics of organizations.[29] That is, organizations are built around what goes on anyway.

What makes the new wave theory different from past ideologies at least at this stage in its development, is that it recognizes the world as having many realities, not just one truth and one right way of thinking and ordering. We have learned from the physicists that what you see is what you get or, in organizational terms, where you stand depends on where you sit.[30] No one has the best perspective on problems, or knows what is best in curriculum development or facilities planning. Sharing numerous perspectives is essential to effective planning and decision making.

Planning Within a Government Content

Aside from the very powerful influence of organizational structure on the theory, practice and politics of planning, governments, particularly state and federal,

place legal constraints on both the substance and the process of planning. Historically, this has not always been the case, but since 1965, the role of the federal government and increasingly that of state governments have grown to significant proportions.[11] The purpose of this section is not to review specific legislation, but to point out sources of legal constraint that form a part of the local planning environment of school administrators.[12] The school business administrator is generally not expected to do all of the legislative planning in a district, but certainly he or she must be conversant with such planning, particularly those areas that influence specific functions of the office.

Statutory Law

Statutory law is a natural starting point in a district's review of the legal aspects of the planning environment, for such law has both broad applicability and is the origin of administrative laws. There are three purposes for such a review which can impact district planning. The first is to determine minimum standards, e.g., building requirements, transportation safety codes, auditing guidelines and so on. These are coded and catalogued in every state.[13] The second is to determine generally the level of flexibility that a district has under the law by understanding the broad intent or spirit of the law in any given area. The third is to be able to become actively involved in the legislative process. For many years, local school administrators treated legislation and policy pronouncements of Congress and state legislatures as "given" and "have tos" over which they had little control. There is good historical reason for this attitude. The increased volume of state and federal legislation affecting local school districts, however, has spurred a change in attitude. Today, school administrators are overcoming years of passivity and getting involved in the formulation of policy at state and national levels which they will be ultimately in charge of implementing. What seemed absurd a generation ago, that is, having local interests represented directly in the legislative process, is today a requirement for long-range planning.

Administrative Law

As school planners and policy makers are well aware, legislation is always interpreted by intermediaries who provide their own perspective of how the law should be implemented. Efforts have been made, especially in the last decade, to assure that legislative intent is not under or overstated by bureaucratic arms of the federal and state governments, but regulations remain a major source of concern and of specific constraint to local planning. Aside from being involved in the legislative process, local districts need representation in the design of the regulations which in turn, are often interpreted even more specifically as "administrative procedures."

Beyond the role of sentinel, local districts should be advocating flexibility, local option and looser arrangements to permit schools to operate in ways that literally "make sense" locally. Of course this stance is not universally applicable, for some standards such as fire codes and pupil safety might well be applied in a uniform manner. When such is the case, conventional efficiency procedures, such as forms and minimum standards, can be helpful. Regulations should assist local schools in planning for and carrying out legislative intent.

Auditing and Evaluation

Federal and state auditing requirements and procedures present special problems to school business administrators, program managers and district administrators. The audits attempt to measure "how the schools/programs are doing." They are, naturally, politically sensitive. Their record-keeping and reporting requirements, which are often mandated by legislation, place specific burdens on the school business office. These burdens have lessened over the past decade with the development of uniform fiscal auditing requirements by the federal government, and the development of computer technology. Nevertheless, the school business manager must be alert to procedural changes and state-of-the-art technology which can most efficiently meet record-keeping and reporting requirements. The business manager must also be ready to share or supply information and systems technology with the rest of the district to facilitate district-wide planning efforts.

Another area of concern related to audits which impacts educational planning is the frequently overlooked relationship among the program audit and evaluation process and legislation and regulations.[14] Program auditors and evaluators are highly visible actors in the policy development process, for it is they who ultimately pronounce programs a success or failure. Yet, organizational theory and its implications on research points to the fact that there is no single truth. One's evaluation of a program or system depends in large measure on where one is within the organization. Indeed, a program can be viewed both a success and a failure depending on how it is evaluated and *by whom*.

As a result, local districts must be zealous in their efforts to ensure that audits and evaluations are both methodologically and substantively in accord with explicit and implicit legislative intent and district purposes. While it is not advocated that every district have its own representative monitoring every stage of the policy development and auditing process, it is important that districts of similar demographic characteristics, goals and size have someone to represent their point of view.

Case Law and Disputes

While relationship between statutory law and case law is not clear in terms of cause-effect, we do know that an increase in one correlates with an increase in the other. As more laws are passed establishing priorities, mandates or rights, the more litigation takes place. Conversely, the more that is litigated through the courts, the more likely legislatures will react to restrict or expand the courts' interpretations. This complex interaction affects every aspect of schooling and certainly has an impact on a district's planning efforts. A school's attorney should be consulted whenever there is any reason to suspect that a planned program or project might precipitate a legal challenge.

Categorical Programs

The governance structure of education also affects the ability to conduct long-range, comprehensive planning, particularly in certain program areas like vocational education. Diverse federal and state legislative mandates result in "piecemeal," fragmented programs designed to ensure funding, but not necessarily to meet the district's educational goals within the program category.

As in the example of vocational education, where a district may be receiving funds from several different "pots" of money each tied to separate legal authorities, it is virtually impossible to have the several programmatic entities in accord with respect to schedule, methodology and purpose. In addition to managing three separate budgets, the school business manager must play an integral part in the district-wide planning effort to ensure that the individual projects relate functionally with the district's immediate and long-range goals for its students.

Social Context of Long-Range Planning

The organizational and governmental contexts of long-range planning are highly significant considerations constituting an important part of the theoretical design for planning. A societal context must also be considered because demographics, economics and politics have powerful and sustained effects on the shape of a plan."

Demographics

Demographics impinge upon local planning in two important ways: the total size and the direction of change of student population, and the educational attainment level and socio-economic characteristics of the adult population that tend to influence students' expectations.

The size of a school district directly affects planning. Large school districts tend to have planning specialists; in small school districts planning is either added to an existing job description (frequently one in the business office) or spread among several positions. All configurations have advantages and disadvantages.

The demographics of the state and region as well as of a specific school district constitute powerful information on which to base long-range plans. Intelligent interpretation of statistics is a complicated matter as many districts are discovering, having gone through the boom of the 1950s and '60s, the bust of the '70s, and the mini-boom of the 1980s and beyond. When to sell buildings, when to lease, or whether to keep teachers through short temporary swings are enormously important decisions that can be helped by studied interpretation of these data.

Of equal importance is the direction of the change in communities. Districts moving from rural to urban, from blue collar to white collar, from predominately one ethnic make-up to another are likely to experience changes in program expectations, tax base and willingness to be taxed for educational purposes. Socio-economic characteristics taken from highly targeted census tract data are usually good indicators about educational goals. When the education level among adults is high there is usually an expectancy for college preparatory programs as well as a relatively high local tax support for such programs. Conversely, lower levels of educational attainment and lower relative income standings usually signify community expectations for "general education" and vocational programs.

As important as this information is for planning, however, it must be used with three significant qualifications. First, actual data is generally available only every ten years. Planners must be mindful when using estimates that they are only estimates. Second, trends established by the census can shift in a matter of two or three years, as for example, with opening of a major source of employment that brings new families to a district.

The proper use of demographic data is to make certain that you have all data resonably available, make charts with it, present simple explanations and interpretations of it, and supplement the presentation with information available from brokers, real estate developers and others concerned with community affairs. Then have teachers and administrators offer their interpretations of the data. Teachers' and administrators' interpretations should be both general to the district as a whole and specific with respect to individual schools. The entire collaborative effort can be very rewarding, invariably leading to more effective plans.

Economics and Politics

The key to converting dreams and shared values to reality is money. "When it is a question of money, everybody is of the same religion," said Voltaire.[36] Good planning in this area can provide untold benefits in areas as obvious as program and as subtle as school climate. No single area is more crucial and none is more subject to factors over which planning has only a modicum of control.

Factors considered under the preceding discussion of demographics suggest local variances that directly affect school budgets. While in all states, save Hawaii, these factors play a part, their significance is in proportion to the mix of local, state and federal funding. States in New England with 60 to 70 percent local funding will clearly be more affected than high state funding areas like post-Propostion 13 California. Changes in demographics also influence the state formula and categorical contributions can affect federal categorical funding as well.

Federal categorical funding is a function of: 1) the willingness of Congress to fund education generally; 2) the specific law governing the programs to be funded; and 3) the amount of funds actually appropriated for each program. There are pre-funding access points at which educators can make their wishes and advice known and contribute to a stabilized policy environment. Although not seen as a conventional planning activity, monitoring public policy developments clearly supports a district's planning effort. The history of Title I is a case in point. Due to local school involvement, there was a shift from single to multi-year funding[37] guarantees leading to financial stabilization. In most instances, state funding is more important to a school district than federal funding in terms of dollars and flexibility. State educational funds are normally used for "general" purposes, while federal funds are typically targeted for programs. States' financial contribution to local school systems has been on the increase over the past two decades with respect to both dollars and percentage of total budget. Long-range planning concerns regarding state aid are not related to purpose but to the amount of dollars available in the future. For planning purposes school districts need to know how much can be counted on in three, five or ten years. Without multi-year commitments, which states do not generally make, local district planning must be based on estimates (usually based on optimistic, pessimistic and most-likely forecasts).

Clearly, the lack of multi-year funding places a significant constraint on local planning efforts. It is not impossible, however, for local districts to receive commitments from key legislators to a level of funding, assuming an agreed upon inflation rate. Similarly, districts can seek provision in the formula for hold-harmless clauses that prevent drastic reductions of state aid in any one year. Each of these mechanisms serve to stabilize the planning environment.

The early to mid 1980s witnessed rekindling of private sector interest in the public schools, an interest which is not likely to have a significant impact on direct

dollar contributions, but could have important indirect consequences. The interest seems to be based upon two factors: that good schools are needed to attract good industry, and that good schools are needed to produce competent workers.

This is not the place to raise concern over shifting public school values to the singular pursuit of economic goals. Economic goals and issues are key to the schools' program as it relates to a community's private and public sectors and social and economic interests. The entire community has a responsibility for planning. Placing a school district's planning activities within the context of community-wide planning is both sound planning strategy and good politics. Indeed, it provides the necessary foundation and stability for a plan to work.

Private sector interests can be powerful allies in attesting to the positive relationship between good schools and a community's or region's ability to attract and keep desirable professions, businesses and industry. Thus, it is important to educate the private sector about the long-term advantages of a quality education.

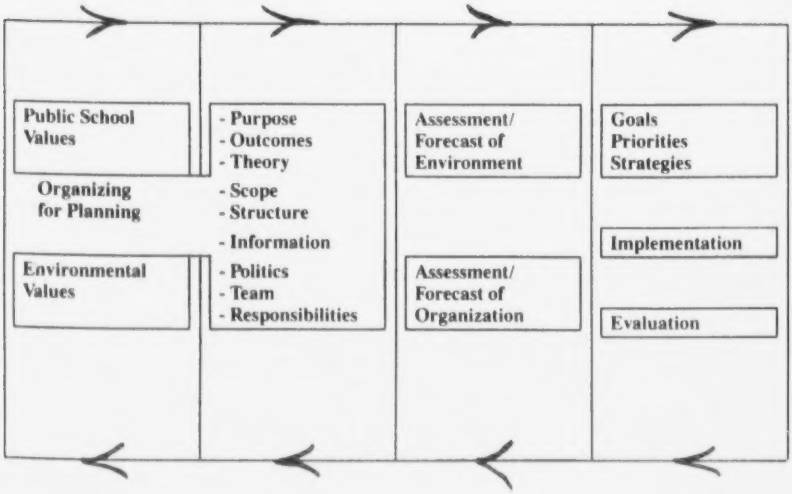
A Policy for Planning

This chapter does not include a "how to" planning process or model, for school districts need to think through a process that makes sense for their own organization, not merely adopt a model. Even if the process which emerges looks similar to processes and models used by others, the ownership and understanding that comes from thinking and doing is important.

Much long-range planning in school is approached as a ritual, often elaborate, with unrelenting paperwork. The yield of information from such efforts that is useful to the future of the organization is typically quite limited. The mammoth planning documents become an end in themselves rather than a means to an end. Planning is often little more than an elaborate, symbolic exercise, robbing important person hours from other projects and resulting only in the illusion of achievement.

The approach to planning described below is intended to serve as a simple schematic presentation. In fact, it is purposefully simplistic so that "adherence" would be impossible without thoughtful attention to process.

Figure 10:1 The Planning Process



Public School Values

For reasons central to the theme of this chapter, discussions about a school's purpose should take place involving all district employees.[38] The process is crucial, perhaps even more so than the product. Led by high level district officers and school board members, the discussion process should be aimed at defining basic values. The discussions are not gripe sessions but a genuine effort to set the general but fundamental direction implied by beliefs and values. This inital process is simultaneously loose and tight, open and closed. There is no mistake in purpose, but there must be enough openness and looseness to let ideas have time to "cook." Compulsive and hurried activity at this point is the first clear message that you don't really care.[39]

An exciting vision of the future is an appropriate first step. A clearly articulated vision has the capacity to stir people to move with high energy, dedication and high performance. Without a value-sense, organizations tend to live in the past, with memory killing innovation.[40]

A broad visionary statement is only the beginning. Care must be taken to ensure that the statement of values becomes a shared belief, a channel through which to create a set of specific achievement goals and stategies. Without an intention to act, the vision remains illusion. Another danger is that the vision will become so broad that everything, including past practices, flies under its banner. If it means everything, it means nothing. Still another danger is that the vision which raises the moral and ethical issues will slip into self-righteousness, a self-defining absoluteness and, in the end, a self-defeating moral bankruptcy. The difference is in attitude. The pursuit of excellence can free or enslave.

Environmental Values

As the depiction is intended to demonstrate, the particular values chosen for an

organization are important not only on their own terms but in how they integrate with their environment. As the earlier discussion has stressed, the school exists in a set of cultural values with which it must deal. Citizens should be informed about what professional educators feel to be the important, baseline values, and educators, in turn, need to be well informed about the community's values and beliefs, through interaction and fact-to-face contact.[41] Interviews and questionnaires are important data gathering methods, but nothing should be thought to take the place of systematic, informal, discussions and listening. Aside from the issue-de-jour, school planners must be attuned to the historical, and often deeply embedded values, of the community and its environs and link these with events that portend trends for the future.

Also included in an environmental assessment of values are those values that underlie state and national trends,[42] and make America the wonderful place it is. And while basic values remain relatively stable they give rise to different trends as society's priorities change. Sometimes such change causes conflict. Pursuit of equality and excellence by school reform efforts of the mid to late 1960s, the early 1970s and of the 1980s are illustrative of tensions arising out of changing emphases on values.

The most difficult task conceptually is to develop a framework within which all environmental values can be understood. Initially the framework should not be tight. Nevertheless, it is important to have a definite direction which includes: 1) knowing what you stand for (the fundamental purpose and reason-for-being of public schools); 2) eliciting community values (those deeply embedded, present manifestations and emerging trends); 3) eliciting state and national values and trends; and 4) analyzing how these values interrelate and have implications for school operations. The process will focus the district planning effort on those concerns which are most important to the community and the role the school plays in it. In-depth study will be required in some areas. As the environmental values influencing the community are uncovered and explored, broad paths of action consistent with these fundamental values will become evident.

Organizing for Planning

School values directly affect the purposes of planning and how the planning activities are organized. The fundamental purposes of a school system are an initial indicator of the following: 1) what planning is expected to do; 2) who will be involved in the planning; and 3) what information will be most crucial.

The following activities form the basis for a long-range planning organization within a school:

- The purpose of planning be established.
- The intended outcomes of planning be clarified
- A planning theory be agreed on.
- The scope of planning be established.
- A structure for planning be established.
- Information requirements be reviewed.
- Politics of planning be carefully considered.
- A planning team be established.
- Responsibilities be clarified.

Purpose of Planning

The first organizational activity is to determine the purposes planning is to fulfill.[43] This is the key to all that follows. Planning can readily serve the purpose of control, it can serve a symbolic purpose and it can be used for pedagogical purposes. These are not necessarily either/or categories, as all can be used simultaneously, but one or the other can be predominant in a school district.

In the discussion on planning theory and again in considering organizational context, control has historically predominated planning purposes. There is broad agreement today that the rational-technical theory on which this purpose is based is too rigid for real-world organizations. Nevertheless two important considerations emerge from this theory. First, there are some areas in which tight structure and control are necessary, like payroll, transportation, safety measures and financial audit procedures. The key question is, what areas, if routinized, make the operation more efficient for the purpose of educating children?

Second, the consideration that organizations can be both centralized and decentralized, depending on the activity or goal. Thus the perspective of what is loose or tight is a function of where one is in the organization. Routinely overlooked by classical rational theory, simultaneous loose-tight properties of organizations are commonly recognized by theorists and managers today.[44] Despite the reality and the newly emerging theories, conventional planning models still reflect control as the primary purpose of planning. For this reason alone it is easy to follow a rational-technical model in spite of the weight of experience which indicates "tight" is not the one best way.

One must not downplay the political importance of a district being perceived by others as being well-ordered and "tight." Given its long history, the rational model conforms to one of the public's expectancies and is, therefore, very important for symbolic reasons and, not incidentally, for funding. The questions that a school district planner/administrator must answer is how much he or she believes control to be the primary purpose, and to what extent the model, even when honored more in the breach than in fact, is causing dysfunctions within the organization.

A third purpose of planning is pedagogical[45]—that of providing information, perspectives and alternatives to some or all other functions of the organization. In this way planning can be viewed similarly to research. Both research and planning function as an enhancement to the organization's ability to learn.[46] If structure and the function of planning follow this purpose, planning is seen as a service arm of the organization rather than as a control function. Assisting others in solving their own problems becomes more important than solving problems for them. The planner is a team member rather than the technical authority. Beyond this function, the planner also provides a long-range perspective not only regarding purposes of the organization, but also assists in tracing the consequences of alternatives designed to resolve immediate problems. Thus long-range planning is both a function of and informative to short-range planning.

Which purposes the school business administrator sees planning satisfying will affect the organization and the nature of planning. In the abstract, the response is likely to be "all of the above." If such is the case, the job increases in complexity, for "purposes" are central to decisions related to centralizing or decentralizing, loosening or tightening, controlling or teaching and so forth. Even if no decision is made initially about the purpose of planning, over time planning will tend to be

characterized by one purpose or another. As Lindblom observed, numerous small decisions have a way of drifting into and becoming policy.

Planning Outcomes

The outcomes of planning must answer what is generally expected as an end result of the significant expenditure of time and money in the district's planning effort. Criteria for success should be stated for political reasons as well as to provide a basis to justify expenditure of resources.

Outcomes relate to the issue of process versus product discussed earlier. If products, such as planning documents, are the chief measure of success (this is most often the case in planning), the entire planning effort will tend to be directed toward document production regardless of values or planning theory. If planning is viewed as a process, on the other hand, it is less easily measured. In such cases, it must be very clearly stated as an emphasis. Ideally, one should not focus on product or process, but rather on achieving a desired balance between the two. In other words, view the process as a product.

Planning Theory

In earlier sections of this chapter, various approaches to planning, their assumptions, their implications and authors' preferences and rationales were discussed. The latter flow from 1980s organizational theory and are both realistic and important in this age of reform. One must recognize that society is undergoing a major transition and that a planning style must be commensurate with a degree of comfort as well as the local organizational reality. The importance of local control cannot be overemphasized. Under any circumstances, however, one will have to choose, implicitly or explicitly, to adopt some variant or combinations of the rational model, an incremental, mixed-scanning, organizational developmental approach or the "new wave" view of organizational planning.

Planning Scope

With a thoughtful analysis of values and the other basics of planning, the next step is to consider the scope of planning. There are three alternatives, all of which have political and resource implications: a comprehensive planning approach, a key areas approach in which related areas such as student academic progress and staff development are the focus, or an approach that features specific items within these or other categories.

A comprehensive plan, irrespective of planning theory, offers an advantage in taking initiatives simultaneously in a number of related areas and thus creating a synergy of forces in which the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Comprehensive planning also permits a wide range of trade-offs or compromises, both within the organization and with outside political forces. Quite commonly, for example, extra money is tied to accountability, but this can also be tied to everything from curricular redesign to methods for evaluating teachers.

On the other hand, comprehensive long-range planning requires enormous resources and energy and, perhaps above all, a mind set for reform. The board, the community, the superintendent, other administrators and teachers must believe that such an effort is necessary and will produce results. A small nucleus team can

be assembled initially to promote a central vision and assist in building commitment to the concept of comprehensive long-range planning. Others can be added to the process at a later date.

An alternative to comprehensive planning is to select several key areas as a planning focus. The areas ideally should be interrelated to take advantage of synergistic effects. Under a key areas approach, for example, building maintenance and staff development may be selected as priorities for political or practical reasons. The advantage of this approach is that the targets are broad enough to gain support and generate enthusiasm, yet does not appear too ambitious a planning project given district resources. In a hostile environment, the approach has the political advantage of protecting proposed programs from public scrutiny until the climate is appropriate. Proposals for reform are vulnerable to public criticism particularly when interest groups have years to mount their challenge.

A third alternative is to conduct planning with a highly limited focus, designed to show that planning does work, and that somebody is taking action toward resolving a particular problem. Focused planning on a limited area must demonstrate thoughtful analysis and preparation for anticipated future trends or events. It has the advantage of demonstrating within a short time frame how a plan translates into action and resolves problems. If done well, it has the added advantage of demonstrating how the planning function contributes to organizational decision making. This helps, in turn, to counteract the criticisms that planning is peripheral to operations or, worse, another layer of unneeded bureaucracy.

The second and third strategies clearly require fewer resources than comprehensive planning and are particularly appropriate when there is a need to demonstrate the value of planning or to make rapid shifts in deployment of resources in response to uncertainties in the environment. Indeed, under conditions of extreme uncertainty, comprehensive planning need not be undertaken unless the risks for not doing so are very high.

The driving factor behind any planning activity are those values which describe what schools are in the business of doing. Even when immediate considerations divert attention from them, the general directions should be well articulated.

In summary, to determine the scope of planning it is helpful to answer these questions:

- Is the culture of the organization prepared for significant reform? If not, is it possible to create a reform desire? If the response to both is no, is there any reason to consider comprehensive planning?

- What are the human resources needed for your approach to planning? Are these available or can they be made available?

- Does the district have the dollar capacity and the political will to carry through on long-range planning, comprehensive or otherwise?

The choices involved in determining scope need not be considered in isolation. There is no reason why all three of the strategies cannot be pursued simultaneously. Much depends on district needs, the political and organizational climate and resource availability.

Finally, considerations related to scope must be analyzed within the context of considerations related to planning theory. One could argue, for example, that the incremental strategy is more suited to immediate and uncertain situations with low risk. Equally arguable is the idea that new wave thinking be used at least in some measure under any circumstances. If scope must be narrowed for immediate payoff, the education-related function of planning would necessarily be mitigated in the short-run, but its contribution to the long term remains important.

Structure of Planning

Structure of planning as we are using it describes where the planning office is located (or the planning functions performed), the skills associated with planning, and the reporting relationships of the person(s) responsible for planning.

In considering physical office location, it should be recognized that in the real world of organizations, form (structure) typically follows function, but the converse also may be true. Much depends upon where the planner is placed within the organization and which "tools of the trade" are associated with that office or function. If the planner is to provide data to the central office (certainly it is not uncommon that a planning office contribute to centralized decision making) the planning office must be a centralized office.[47] Securing data from unwilling sources requires both political and technical strength. On the other hand, a decentralized planning structure suggests that planning is used primarily for the purposes of "planning-as-pedagogy."

In the centralized version, the products of planning are generally conceived as technical documents, more often than not used for political and symbolic purposes to underwrite a position. Rather than being viewed as useless, as when administrators bemoan that "the plan took two years to develop and now sits on the shelf," plans serve on important, symbolic function. As guides to action, however, they generally fail miserably.[48]

In the decentralized version, "products" of planning are seen as user-oriented documents developed for the purpose of informing decision makers about policy choices, carefully weighted in terms of data availability and both long and short-term consequences. For example, different types of data may be aggregated according to levels of need within the district. The planner, in this instance, is seen as a member of a problem-solving team whose function is to present, inform and interpret, not to decide.

Role and Requirements of Information

Information plays an important role in the planning activity. As a result, when organizing to plan, one must understand the role information plays as well as the basic data requirements concerning environmental trends and other categories of information on the planning effort.[49] The basic questions that must be answered are:

- What level of data do you want (e.g. by student, by classroom, by school).
- Is the data available in a form that you can use?
- What are the hardware, software and data analysis requirements?

Obviously, questions of data requirements relate directly to the discussion on scope of planning.

Technical Politics

An understanding of the politics of planning is crucial to planning policy development. First there is the politics of information. In most organizations, information is power that is earned at great cost and given up reluctantly. Perhaps the one most troublesome area in planning is the continual retrieval of up-to-date information that is collected through others. There is a great temptation to delay or give partial information, to answer technically, but not necessarily in the spirit intended, to misinform with over or under statements or to simply ignore requests for information.[50] One reason for the problem is clearly the paperwork burden it places on teachers and administrators. Another is that people are reluctant to yield to others their own basis of expertise and ultimately decision-making authority. A third reason relates to the interpretation of data. Frequently, providers of information share the concern that data, in the form in which it was asked, serves to misinform as well as inform. At best, data that has been stripped of context[51] can give only a partial story but purports to tell the whole.

Other concerns related to data concern methodology and the level and type of data to be used. A planner should recognize the limitation of data no matter what methodology was employed or how thoroughly it was assessed. Those who best know the context from which the data were abstracted should be invited to participate not only in its interpretation, but also in the consideration of possible direct and indirect consequences.

As best, any plan can only be an approximation. The amount of detail that is put in a plan is a function, in part, of what is to be planned. Generally speaking, planning is far more than a technical exercise involving more than technical skills. Overplanning, always a temptation for those who see planning as a technical science, is all too feasible. On the other hand, a planner with good technical skills who can also function well in the political and human arenas, has a very good chance of making a big difference. His or her "product" is not just a planning document, but rather a useful tool which will impact (hopefully positively) the future of education within a community.

The Planning Team

The formation of a planning team depends on the range of decision-making authority to be given individuals and team members and the extent those assigned a formal responsibility are supposed to do the work themselves or delegate it. The following factors need to be taken into consideration when selecting members of the planning team:

- Deep commitment to the goals (vision) of the planning effort.
- Ability to communicate that vision to others.
- Particular skill or knowledge
- Appropriate political alliances.
- Position within the organization (to help translate vision into reality).

Planning Responsibilities

By this point in organizing for planning, decisions related to responsibilities

must be addressed. The following is a checklist of decision points:

- Who is directly accountable for keeping the planning effort going?
- Is the proposed organizational placement of planning appropriate to the goals?
- Who will report to whom about what and in what form for planning? for operations?
- What are the approximate time lines that you have in mind for accomplishing the various stages of planning? of implementation?
- Who is responsible for assuring that the planning effort has a designated and realistic budget?
- Are evaluations and assessments of, for example, students, teachers or programs included in the responsibilities of the planning team?
- Who will be responsible for implementation of the operations? (When the planning, or some piece of it, is ready to be implemented, does the locus of responsibility shift?)

The Planning Process

Assessment and Forecast of the Environment

Since there is a large body of literature concerning methods and technology for gathering and using information,[52] the purpose of this section is to suggest categories and elaborate on points that are often overlooked.

Types of data and forecasts are:

- Demographic and social
- Economic
- Political
- Fiscal
- Governmental

These have been discussed earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless, it is important to make two further points. First, if the most current data are of questionable validity, forecast data are even more so.

Second, once you have all the qualified data you need, it must be subjected to two types of interpretation. One deals with areas of likely stability and instability over the length of the forecast. While highly judgmental, by assessing and forecasting these dimensions together, some "educated" guesses can be made as to which estimates will most likely hold up and which are subject to too many unknowns to be predictable. In order to take action toward a long-range goal, these judgments must be made, and this explicit recognition of judgment will serve to make more clear the nature and extent of the uncertainty with which you are dealing.

A second interpretation is needed which anticipates environmental events that will impact the school district. There are two considerations here. First, what is the general (macro) impact in terms of numbers such as changes in population or tax base? The second (micro) consideration relates to program goals and tries to predict what the impact of environmental changes will be on specific goals and strategies which form the basis of the essential vision of the district.

Making interpretations and "best judgments" based on data of only approximate validity may not appear worthwhile. Yet, these are two reasons why it is important. First, by being informed and thoughtful about the future, a district can consistently avoid being caught by surprise. Second, by recognizing and discussing the shortcomings of data and interpretations, an organization will tend to remain procedurally flexible to meet the changes. People and organizations have a tendency to become rigid without the antidote of known uncertainty.

Assessment and Forecast of the Organization

The following categories must be taken into account in order to further the essential vision of a school.

- People
- Structure and function of the organization
- Program (explicit and hidden)
- Technologies
- Budget

The most important resource of public schools is its staff. Planning literature gives the impression that people are little more than a piece of technology. While people do possess technologies, they should be viewed as a unique resource with the potential for organizational transformation. Tapping people's talents and nurturing prospective leaders is critical to the planning process.

Structure and function of the organization is to be planned in accordance with how one wants people to act. The conditions for growth and development must be viewed from the perspective of the individual and from the perspective of the general school climate for development.

Even though the data are less than certain and interpretations and judgments must always remain sufficiently open for change and sufficiently closed for action to occur, there is no avoiding the task. It is better to be explicit and recognize the weak points than not to do the planning at all. If, however, assessments and forecasts are made which become static in their interpretations, especially of people and their development potential, planning then becomes not an agent of excitement, hope and change, but a reinforcement of the worse bureaucratic disease of rigidity.

Goals, Priorities and Strategies

While most of the literature related to planning puts goals, priorities and strategies first, this chapter is written with the intention of preparing the organization to engage in long-range planning. Like planting, a prerequisite to successful planning is to prepare the ground. Thoughtful analysis about purpose, scope, personnel, resources, environmental impacts and the like are essential to successful planning. Moreover, there is a sense of emanating from the schools' vision which, though not specific goal statements, serves to support organization of planning. Since the whole process is highly interactive, no matter where one starts, one should arrive at the same place.

With comprehensive planning, limited resources will preclude all things from being attempted at once. Program goals and enabling or supporting goals should be established separately, with priorities and strategies then set accordingly as a matter of procedural preference.

Implementation

The single greatest failure of planning has been the inability to move off the drawing board into action. Until recently, planning has been historically concerned with "planning" as an autonomous function, connected only by logic to the "real world." Today, planning is viewed as a way of thinking about and addressing the future.

To facilitate implementation, the implementors (teachers and administrators) need to be involved with planning for a variety of reasons stated earlier in the chapter. They need to feel "ownership" of the strategies which they will be conducting. They have the educational perspective (as opposed to a generalist one). In addition, planners must be implementors and implementors planners in order to make appropriate procedural changes and assessments of how well the district is doing. As disjointed incrementalism made clear, the information which implementors have about assessment is critical. It is especially important for the implementors who must clearly understand the simultaneous loose and tight properties of a plan (i.e., tight around the essential vision, loose around their capacities as professionals to make operational changes without losing sight of the purpose of the enterprise).

Evaluation

The planning literature makes a distinction between process and product evaluation or between evaluation of the plan and its procedures for implementation, on the one hand, and outcomes (activities accomplished or real effects on children) on the other.

The evaluation process should clearly distinguish between program goals and support goals. For each, planning and implementation procedures should be assessed and evaluated so that the degree of success or failure can be measured and the question, "Why?" answered. This sort of evaluation is primarily used by management to gather information about instruction and make appropriate improvements. It is helpful to know what worked and what did not work. Even when some aspect of the plan is not "successful," it is still useful if something is learned from it. The dynamic model of evolution, after all, features organizational regularity and experimentation as essential to progress. Program evaluation, relating to both outputs and outcomes, employs benchmarks that attempt to answer the question, "Did we make a difference?"[9] This data can be used for both program improvement and development.

Going to the heart of everything discussed in this chapter, is the question, "What are you willing to accept as information?" This chapter has stressed the importance of belief, vision, a shared sense of purpose and a sense of being involved in something important, all of which lends vitality to the work place. Process is as important as the product. In schools process means people, and without them quality is likely to be lost.

What is needed, therefore, are tight measures of process and product, but considerable looseness in judging excellence. Quality is most easily recognized *post facto* and can never be fully described. School professionals are regularly judged by the quality of their choices. Quality is recognized by stipulate criteria, deliberate measurement and an unknown mix of observed events, interpretation and

integration. Describing the key factors and how they come together for one school is not a prescription for another school. One must be tight when this makes sense in ethical, professional, motivational and technological terms, and loose in all cases with which we pretend to know more than we do.[54]

Making It Work

The school business office should govern its relationships with others based on the most fundamental school system beliefs. In its interactions with teachers, administrators, board and community it is critical that actions taken by the business office be consistent with the district's goals. A very simple statement guides the action of the Johnson City, New York, school district: "*All children can learn anything they want given enough time.*" This basic belief conditions all action in the school system and provides a framework for the business office to conduct its essential services.

The superintendent of the Johnson City schools explains it this way. "The business office in our school system works in concert with others to enhance the children's ability to learn. The focus on learning gives the community, teachers, administrators and the business office a common purpose, a purpose which builds a sense of belonging and identity." Put differently, the business office helps to develop budgets and long-range plans that are focused on a set of goals established to assist students.

Given this set of goals and given the centrality of mission, the school business administrator in this example plays a prominent role in the educational process. Instead of the singular responsibility being the exercising of controls over the budget, the school business administrator has the dynamic role of helping people imaginatively utilize resources aimed at attaining the school's mission. The school business administrator can help teachers, for example, combine resources to get more for each dollar. They can help teachers and administrators examine ways to organize people and resources by stressing the dynamics of efficiency. Questions of efficiency, therefore, extend beyond a concern for a balanced budget. Efficiency relies on a thoughtful analysis of total resource allocation—human, physical and financial working toward a common end. The focus of business office's planning becomes both a balanced budget and working with others to get the most educational effectiveness out of existing resources.

From this perspective, the effectiveness of school programs is enhanced by looking at the budget as something that supports and reinforces the mission. Most often, the budget is seen as pots of money allocated to programs, departments and individuals in the school, with the business office's responsibility being solely to affirm that money has been spent in the proper way and that it does not exceed the limits of the budget. What is required, however, is a dynamic view of budgeting in which there is a pool of resources — people, materials, equipment and the business office—helping to achieve the best possible mix in or to attain educational goals. The school business administator must enter into a pedagogical and helping relationship with others in the district.

In terms of long-range planning, an important educational function of the business office is to bring a variety of data (discussed earlier) to bear on immediate educational problems and issues, as well as on the operational aspects of long-range planning. There must be ongoing discussion between the business office's

personnel who collect and interpret data and those responsible for educational program decisions in the schools. Under this conception, all personnel within a school system become full, participating members in the commitment to quality education.

Another way the school business administrator plays an important role in developing long-range plans is by providing data and analyses to the school board, either through the office of the superintendent or directly. The board is strategic to forging the commitment to and providing resources for the fundemental purpose of schools. The board's concern in this regard will clearly be different from that of teachers and principals. Nevertheless, the school business administrator's role remains that of educator and helper.

Finally, a closely related yet distinct role of the school business administrator is that of stabilizing the policy environment.[55] The role of the school business administrator is to anticipate change and through planning activities (such as new legislation and the development of contingency plans) moderate the effects of the environment on educational attainments. If formal planning is not feasible or insufficient, the school business administrator may negotiate or otherwise reach understandings with others who do control the political environment.[56]

Planning agencies, state and local policymakers and business interests all have an influence on density and type of housing. It is a point for school-community discussion how housing, property rates, real wealth and state finance formulas balance out in terms of both equity and quality of schooling. Decisions as to where to place housing and business impact on public transportation policy and all affect the conditions under which a school district operates. An imaginative school business administrator, therefore, is likely to conduct prolonged discussions with local interests concerning good schools being magnets for good business.

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